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ABSTRACT

This book relates a White teacher's experiences in an Athabascan village in Alaska in an attempt to theorize pedagogy in a real-world situation. The book presents itself as a hybrid of autobiography, Native American resistance struggle, postcolonial discourse, radical composition theory, case study, and ethnography. The teacher's narrative explains how he came to be a bush teacher; describes complex classroom dynamics, where some students resisted the dominant culture, some were alienated from Native culture, and others were marginalized from both; discusses his growing acquaintance with his students and their competence in the outdoors; describes how students were engaged by a Foxfire-style, outdoor, culture-based project; and examines his own journey of self-discovery and realization of the teacher's role as cultural imperialist. Several pedagogies are critiqued: traditional cognitivist pedagogy, basic writing practice, "contact zone" pedagogy, conflict-oriented pedagogy, and Foxfire teaching practices. The aim throughout is to illustrate the possibilities for a pedagogy in the "bicultural borderlands" that more truly serves the interests and needs of the marginalized borderland learner: a pedagogy whose goal is not acculturation but agency, that is not predicated on the transmission of knowledge but on the transference of authority, that does not foreground assimilation into the dominant culture but spiritual redemption through reconnection to an indigenous subculture. The narrative also investigates the manner in which ethnicity, deracination, and acculturation affect the acquisition of literacy, and the ways in which literacy has been used as a cultural weapon. (Contains 112 references and an index.) (SV)

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